

Relics of the Franklin Expedition: Discovering artifacts from the doomed Arctic voyage of 1845. Garth Walpole. Edited by Russell Potter. 2017. Jefferson: McFarland. 229 p, paperback. ISBN 9781476667188. USD 39.95.

Relics of the Franklin Expedition is a deeply-researched study of the material culture from the lost Franklin expedition to the Northwest Passage, which has captured the imagination of so many people. The book delivers on its title by providing an in-depth examination of the artifacts, particularly their contexts of recovery. Many books have been written on the Franklin expedition but little has been done on the material culture, or relics, of the expedition that were left behind in the Canadian archipelago and this book fills that gap admirably. The author's aim is to "better understand their significance and place in terms of the wider context of material culture studies" (p. 3) and in this way, the book provides a new perspective on the Franklin search. Walpole argues that the relics are significant, not only because they constituted the only visible evidence of the expedition's fate, but also for their stories of transmission and reception. Edited by Russell Potter (sadly, the author passed away in 2015), this book will prove a useful resource for scholars of Arctic history and archaeology.

From the outset, the author makes clear that the object of this book is not an attempt "to retell the story of the Franklin expedition" (p. 4), rather to examine the artifacts within their geographical and historical contexts, thereby opening up the possibility of entering "into a dialogue, through them, with the men of HMS *Erebus* and *Terror*" (p. 4). Walpole points out that the artifacts associated with the Franklin expedition can be regarded as "relics" (p. 6) due to their links to specific people and events, links through which family members still felt connected to the deceased.

Relics of the Franklin Expedition contains five chapters, a thoughtful introduction and conclusion, four useful appendices, and more than 60 well-chosen illustrations and maps. There is a logical and chronological progression of chapters, beginning with the initial discoveries of artifacts and sites in 1851 and concluding with the display and reception of the relics up to the present day. The majority of the Franklin relics were found between 1850 and 1880 on two main locations in the Canadian archipelago: Beechey Island and King William Island. In Chapter 1, the main focus is on sites of interest identified on Beechey Island in the summer of 1851, such as the cairn, storehouse, and three graves of expedition members. The second chapter details the continued search for relics between 1851 and 1854, as its title indicates, and includes those right up until the twenty-first century, with the expeditions to King William Island by those such as John Rae, Francis McClintock, and Frederick Schwatka given particularly close attention. The third chapter discusses some of the ideas arising from an examination of the circumstances surrounding the finds. For example, Walpole notes the character of King William Island as a liminal place within Inuit culture and society, particularly the island's rarely visited northeast coast, which became even less frequented as a result of the Franklin disaster. The author also investigates why particular objects were left behind during the search and why Europeans and Inuit prioritised different types of items: the former focused on securing items that belonged to the officer classes, while the latter collected things that could be reused or repurposed in a useful manner. In Chapter 5, the focus is on how the relics were subsequently illustrated, photographed, and displayed, in order to reach a wider audience. Appendix 1 comprises a list of over 400 artifacts held by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Here, the sheer quantity and variety of items cause us to pause and contemplate the real human lives behind the artifacts.

The search for traces of the Franklin expedition resulted in deep interaction with Inuit communities and the participation of both women and men in the discovery of bodies and retrieval of artifacts. Walpole's work makes visible this interaction and the high level of Inuit cooperation in the search for Franklin. The author notes that inconsistencies in Inuit testimony are unsurprising and may be attributed to several factors: in many cases witness accounts were second-hand and translators were not necessarily equally knowledgeable in both local geography and language, leading to confusion and misinterpretation. Significantly, the author identifies the silences and gaps in the narratives of finding the relics. Indeed, this book also highlights the conflicting accounts of the search in the published narratives of white men as well as its

competitive nature, particularly in 1851, when so many ships descended on Beechey Island and the site began to take on the nature of a tourist destination.

While this is by no means a criticism of the book, it would be intriguing to take Walpole's work further and create a distribution map of the artifacts' findspots on Beechey and King William Islands in relation to contemporary Inuit settlements and routes, as well as the two ships *Erebus* and *Terror* that were found in 2014 and 2016.

Overall, Walpole has provided us with a meticulous study of the Franklin expedition relics, causing us to ponder more deeply, not only on the material culture of nineteenth-century expeditions, but

also on the inevitable slow decline of the expedition members. In particular, the participation of Inuit in the search is well covered here and this work provides a secure foundation on which future scholars may continue to explore the fate of the Franklin expedition. As the author concludes, had the expedition not failed, the objects now known as relics would have returned to Britain with their owners in the normal way and would have received little, if any, attention. (Eavan O'Dochartaigh, Humlab, Umeå University, 901 87 Umeå, Sweden (eavan.odochartaigh@umu.se))

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